

REMARKS

Claims 2-8 and 10-18 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 2-4, 7-8, 10-12, and 15-17 are amended, and claims 1, 9, and 19-22 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. No new matter is added. Reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicant gratefully acknowledges that the Office Action indicates that claims 2-8 and 10-18 contain allowable subject matter.

Allowable claims 2-4, 7-8, 10-12, and 15-17 are amended into independent form by incorporating all of the limitations of the respective canceled base claims 1 and 9.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance (for the reasons discussed herein); (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration (as the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution); (c) do not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims; and (d) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Yamada (JP 04320347 A). Claims 1 and 9 are canceled, and thus, the §102(e) rejection is now moot. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the §102(e) rejection.

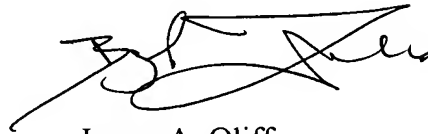
In accordance with the above remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claims 2-4, 7-8, 10-12, and 15-17 define patentable subject matter. Claims 5-6,

13-14, and 18 depend from claims 4, 12, and 17, respectively, and thus, also define patentable subject matter, as well as for the additional features they recite.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 2-8 and 10-18 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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JAO:BAZ/hs

Attachment:
Amendment Transmittal

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